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Regional cooperation

Regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Matters brought to the attention of the Economic and Social Council: Economic Commission for Africa

Summary

The present addendum to the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields contains resolutions and decisions adopted at the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (forty-fifth session of the Economic Commission for Africa) held in Addis Ababa on 26 and 27 March 2012. Full texts of the resolutions are available from: www.un.org/regionalcommissions/sessions.html.

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1. The Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (forty-fifth session of the Economic Commission for Africa),[1] held in Addis Ababa on 26 and 27 March 2012, approved a ministerial statement and 17 resolutions, which are set out below for the attention of the Council.

Summary of the ministerial statement

2. The African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development deliberated on the theme "Unleashing Africa's potential as a pole of global growth" and, inter alia, acknowledged that it was both timely and pertinent. At the same time, the Ministers noted that it was important for the region to address challenges in many areas, including strengthening leadership, governance and institutions; articulating well-resourced long-term visions and plans; building strong development financing and investment systems; modernizing agriculture; significantly scaling up and improving infrastructure networks; nurturing technology, innovation and development clusters; accelerating regional integration; addressing the threat of climate change; and mobilizing the required domestic and external resources, including diaspora remittances.

3. The Ministers noted that, in the renewed quest for structural transformation, it would be necessary to ensure mobilization of the citizenry around a common development vision. Such a vision would, inter alia, have to be complemented by an institutional framework that would be able to effectively harness the potential of the State, the private sector and civil society as key drivers of transformational change and harmonize their actions. They recognized that in order to be sustainable, growth must be broad-based and inclusive, as demonstrated by the democratic transitions unfolding in North Africa, with reverberations in other parts of the continent. In that connection, they emphasized the importance of employment generation, targeted particularly at young people, and stressed the need to sustain and expand measures designed to tackle poverty and improve social welfare.

4. The Ministers committed themselves, inter alia, to promoting and implementing holistic, coordinated and integrated policy approaches to help unleash balanced and sustainable growth and the development potential of their countries at the local, national and regional levels; to strengthening individual and collective leadership and capacities to grasp evolving local and global opportunities in order to speed up the attainment of development transformation; and to scaling up implementation of various regional and global commitments and initiatives that are compatible with the vision of a transformed continent that is able to serve as a pillar of global growth.

Unleashing Africa's potential as a pole of global growth (resolution 890 (XLV))

5. The Conference of Ministers, inter alia, recognized that in order to unleash its potential as a pole of global growth, Africa needed to effectively address challenges and constraints, including the need to continually improve political and economic governance. The Conference called upon African Governments to continue to improve their political and economic governance, pursue their efforts to build developmental States and ensure an enabling environment in which private

[1] Including the Fifth Joint Annual Meetings of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance.

initiatives and investments would flourish; scale up investments in quality education, applied research and development; promote innovation and technology transfer; scale up their efforts in mobilizing internal and external resources for financing development and for addressing humanitarian crises; and accelerate regional integration, promote intra-African trade and harness partnerships with traditional and emerging partners. The Conference also called upon the African Union Commission and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) to develop a coherent approach that would guide Africa's engagement with developed and emerging countries within the framework of South-South cooperation.

Accelerating regional integration and boosting intra-African trade (resolution 891 (XLV))

6. The Conference of Ministers, inter alia, urged member States to deepen and consolidate their regional integration agenda by harmonizing regional and subregional initiatives in order to be more resilient to external shocks and crises and to mainstream various other initiatives, such as the Minimum Integration Programme and the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, in national plans, strategies and budgetary allocations. In that context, the Conference also expressed appreciation for the role played by ECA, the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and the regional economic communities in supporting member States in their efforts to implement regional integration programmes, and called on development partners to continue their support to ECA and the African Union Commission.

Establishment of an African Institute for Remittances (resolution 892 (XLV))[2]

7. The Conference of Ministers, inter alia, recognized that remittances, if well harnessed and formalized, could contribute to growth and development in Africa and appreciated the increasing contribution of remittances to economic and social development in Africa. In that context, the Conference took note of the decision of the Executive Council of the African Union on the establishment of an African Institute for Remittances as a specialized technical office of the African Union Commission and requested the Commission to submit the mandate of the Institute, and its organizational structure, which should be lean and sustainable, to the African Union Permanent Representatives Committee through its relevant subcommittees.

The regional dimension of development (resolution 893 (XLV))

8. The Conference of Ministers, inter alia, recognized that the regional dimension of development is critical for an effective and coordinated response to an ever-growing number of transboundary issues and emphasized the importance of the regional and subregional levels as essential building blocks of effective global governance since they provide the critical links between the global and national levels, especially in the context of the ongoing discussions on an integrated approach to sustainable development and the development agenda beyond 2015. The Conference stressed the important role played by the regional commissions as part of the institutional landscape in each region through norm-setting, dissemination and analytical functions, and as important forums for articulating regional and subregional perspectives on global issues and for building consensus within each

[2] Pertaining to statutory matters of the African Union.

region. The Conference commended the regional commissions for sponsoring the study entitled "The regional dimension of development and the United Nations system" and invited the United Nations system organizations working at the global and regional levels to support the implementation of its recommendations.

9. In addition, the Conference of Ministers requested ECA, working through the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa, and in consultation with other regional and subregional organizations, in particular the African Union and the African Regional Economic Communities, to ensure implementation of the recommendations so that United Nations system engagement with regional and subregional organizations is coherent and strategically coordinated and fits into a larger comprehensive strategy in support of regional integration efforts.

The Millennium Development Goals and the development agenda beyond 2015 (resolution 894 (XLV))

10. The Conference of Ministers, inter alia, recognized the progress being made by the continent towards attaining the targets set out in the Millennium Development Goals, was conscious of the challenges that remained in efforts to attain all the Goals by 2015 and took note of the report on progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Africa 2012. The Conference urged African countries to strengthen their statistical systems and institutions in order to produce reliable and timely statistics for monitoring the progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and mandated the African Union Commission, ECA and the African Development Bank, in close consultation with member States, regional economic communities and all other stakeholders, to identify Africa's priorities for the development agenda beyond 2015. The Conference welcomed the proposal to create an African Task Force on South-South cooperation.

Improving and strengthening South-South cooperation (resolution 895 (XLV))

11. The Conference of Ministers, inter alia, recognized the growing importance of South-South cooperation for Africa and the need for African countries to develop well-oriented and well-designed strategies for South-South cooperation, to enhance coordination at the regional level and to strengthen institutional and governance capabilities in that regard. The Conference called upon African countries to mainstream South-South cooperation into country development strategies; improve understanding of the different national interests and comparative advantages of both African countries and their partners in the South; leverage advantages in negotiations, identifying and channelling resources to key sectors; strengthen knowledge-sharing among African countries; and build up institutional and governance capacities and well-designed cooperation frameworks to manage South-South cooperation activities effectively.

Illicit financial flows from Africa (resolution 896 (XLV))

12. The Conference of Ministers, inter alia, reiterated that illicit financial flows constituted a major development challenge for Africa, draining the continent of needed financial resources, causing economic distortions and perpetuating poverty, and in that context, commended the establishment and inauguration of a High-Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa. The Conference invited the Panel to work actively in addressing the problem and to report to the next Conference of

Ministers; urged different stakeholders, including Governments, civil society organizations, the private sector and regional and international organizations, to fully support the work of the Panel; and called upon ECA to provide the necessary technical backstopping for the Panel.

Implementation of the African Charter on Statistics and the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (resolution 897 (XLV))

13. The Conference of Ministers, inter alia, recognized the importance of statistical information for the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of development programmes and policies for the economic and political integration of Africa and the need to speed up the implementation of ongoing and future activities under the African Charter on Statistics. The Conference called upon member States to incorporate the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa into national and regional strategies for the development of statistics and to mobilize resources for its implementation; and urged countries to allocate resources to institutions dealing with labour statistics in order to facilitate the implementation of a harmonized framework for labour market information systems. In that context, the Conference invited the African Union Commission, ECA, the African Development Bank and partners to strengthen the civil registration and vital statistics secretariat, to mobilize the required resources for operationalization of the AfricaInfo database initiative and to provide the necessary support to enable countries to develop effective data management and dissemination systems aimed at enabling full public access to official statistics.

The cost of hunger in Africa: social and economic impacts of child undernutrition (resolution 898 (XLV))

14. The Conference of Ministers, inter alia, recognized that cutting hunger and achieving food and nutrition security in Africa is important for reducing the vulnerability and enhancing the resilience of national economies and is essential for broader social and economic development. In that context, it urged member States to intensify their efforts and investments to address acute and chronic hunger, applying the principles and priorities put forward in the African Regional Nutrition Strategy and Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme. The Conference welcomed the multi-country study on the cost of hunger in Africa being led by the African Union Commission and ECA, in collaboration with the World Food Programme, to quantify the aggregate social and economic impacts of chronic hunger in Africa and urged member States and partners participating in the study to provide the necessary resources for the successful completion of the study.

Africa in 2050: the making of a global pole (resolution 899 (XLV))

15. The Conference of Ministers, inter alia, noted that Africa has recorded remarkable growth and improved governance since the start of the new millennium and was conscious of the need to sustain that momentum in order to improve livelihoods in Africa significantly and enable the continent to play a major role in global affairs. The Conference took note of the initiative by ECA and the Emerging Markets Forum to prepare a background paper for the Conference entitled "Africa in 2050: the making of a global pole", with a view to undertaking a long-term perspective study on Africa. In that context, it called on ECA, in collaboration with the Emerging Markets Forum, to expeditiously pursue preparation of the perspective

study on Africa in 2050 and urged member States, regional economic communities, the private sector, civil society and other State and non-State actors to support the conduct of the study and to actively contribute to it by providing access to data, information and other documents. It also called upon development partners to lend their support to the study.

Large-scale acquisition of land in Africa (resolution 900 (XLV))

16. The Conference of Ministers, inter alia, noted the increasing investment opportunities in agriculture and the resulting increases in the value of land, water and other natural resources, the recent rise of large-scale land acquisitions, also known as "land-grabbing", and the impact of domestic and foreign direct investment on land, water and related natural resources in Africa. The Conference acknowledged the efforts made under the Land Policy Initiative jointly launched by the African Union Commission, ECA and the African Development Bank in assisting member States to tackle their land issues and took note of the policy messages emanating from the Policy Forum on Foreign Direct Investments in Land in Africa. The Ministers invited the African Union Commission, ECA and the African Development Bank, together with member States and their development partners, to support and work through the Land Policy Initiative in order to expand the capacity to implement the African Union Declaration on Land Issues and Challenges in Africa, to promote alternative land-based investment models and to develop principles and guidelines on large-scale, land-based investment in Africa, to be approved by member States in 2013.

Promoting an innovation society for Africa's social and economic transformation (resolution 901 (XLV))

17. The Conference of Ministers, inter alia, called on African member States to eliminate administrative barriers, reduce the cost of doing business, improve the quality and governance of the education system and its relevance to national needs, enhance intellectual property regimes, and put innovation infrastructure in place and enhance the interactions between industry, academia, the public sector and government. It noted with appreciation the significant initiatives launched as a result of resolution 887 (XLIV), inviting African Governments and the private sector to facilitate pan-African initiatives in support of African innovators and inventors, including the Innovation Prize for Africa and the biomedical engineering programme. The Conference commended ECA and the African Union Commission for sustaining the Science with Africa conference as the leading forum for policy and technical discussion and interactions among scientists, policymakers and the private sector and requested ECA to strengthen its collaboration with the African Innovation Foundation and other partners in ensuring the sustainability of the Innovation Prize for Africa.

Establishment of the African Mineral Development Centre (resolution 902 (XLV))

18. The Conference of Ministers, inter alia, recognized the important role that mineral resources play in fostering broad-based development and structural transformation of African economies and the importance of improving the management and governance of Africa's enormous and untapped natural resources. The Conference took note of the establishment of an African Mineral Development Centre by the African Ministers Responsible for Mineral Resources Development at

its Second Conference and called on the African Union Commission, ECA and the African Development Bank to expedite the establishment of the Centre and to prepare a business plan for it for submission to member States for examination.

Draft strategic framework: proposed biennial programme plan for the Economic Commission for Africa 2014-2015 (resolution 903 (XLV))

19. The Conference of Ministers, inter alia, took note with appreciation of the ECA annual report, which highlighted the significant results achieved by the Commission in all its programme areas, noted with satisfaction the Commission's intention of scaling up the support it provides to member States in improving capacity to formulate and implement development policies at the national and regional levels and to provide stronger and more coherent support to member States in advancing South-South cooperation, and welcomed the goal of the Commission to strengthen support to member States to achieve sustainable development goals, in line with the commitments of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), and to design strategies for poverty reduction after expiry of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015.

20. The Conference endorsed the draft strategic framework and proposed biennial programme plan for ECA 2014-2015 and called on the Committee for Programme and Coordination to support the plan and to ensure that the necessary resources were made available for its implementation.

Admission of South Sudan as a member of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa subregional office for Eastern Africa (resolution 904 (XLV))

21. The Conference of Ministers, inter alia, having welcomed South Sudan as the newest independent State in the world, took note of its request for membership in the ECA subregional office for Eastern Africa. The Conference endorsed the request of South Sudan for membership in the subregional office and urged ECA to take the necessary steps to ensure full membership of South Sudan in that office.

African risk capacity: sovereign disaster risk solutions (resolution 905 (XLV))[3]

22. The Conference of Ministers, inter alia, acknowledged that the current system of ad hoc unpredictable funding for disaster response causes the depletion of critical assets and the reallocation of Government resources from planned investment in times of crisis, slowing economic growth and creating significant setbacks to development. In that context, the Conference took note of the Agreement on the African Risk Capacity Special Arrangement between the African Union Commission and the World Food Programme and noted that the innovative financial strategy for the African Risk Capacity to achieve solvency and sustainability would include initial donor contributions and ongoing premium payments from member States that participate on a voluntary basis, allowing for use of modern financial tools without direct impact on the national budgets of non-participating States.

23. The Conference welcomed the progress report of the Commission on the establishment of the African Risk Capacity and recommended its establishment as a specialized agency of the African Union. The Conference requested that the

[3] Resolution pertaining to statutory matters of the African Union.

Commission convene a meeting of Government experts and subsequently a conference of plenipotentiaries before the end of the year to consider and adopt the Establishment Agreement, urged all African Union member States to actively participate in the process and called on development partners and partner institutions to support that endeavour of critical importance to food security on the continent.

Africa's candidate for the presidency of the World Bank (resolution 906 (XLV))

24. The Conference of Ministers, inter alia, welcomed the nomination of Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Coordinating Minister for the Economy and Minister of Finance of Nigeria, as Africa's sole candidate for the presidency of the World Bank and endorsed Dr. Okonjo-Iweala as Africa's candidate for the position of President of the World Bank.